

Environmental Terms

Action Levels: In the Superfund program, the existence of a contaminant concentration in the environment high enough to warrant action or trigger a response under Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Contingency Plan.

Administrative Order On Consent: A legal agreement signed by EPA and an individual, business, or other entity through which the violator agrees to pay for correction of violations, take the required corrective or cleanup actions, or refrain from an activity. It describes the actions to be taken, may be subject to a comment period, applies to civil actions, and can be enforced in court.

AOC: See **Administrative Order on Consent**.

CERCLA: Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (1980): See **Superfund**.

Cleanup: Actions taken to deal with a release or threat of release of a hazardous substance that could affect humans and/or the environment. The term "cleanup" is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms remedial action, removal action, response action, or corrective action.

Dewater: Remove or separate a portion of the water in a sludge or slurry to dry the sludge so it can be handled and disposed of.

Dredging: Removal of mud from the bottom of water bodies.

Feasibility Study: Analysis of the practicability of a proposal; e.g., a description and analysis of potential cleanup alternatives for a site such as one on the National Priorities List. The feasibility study usually recommends selection of a cost-effective alternative. It usually starts as soon as the remedial investigation is underway; together, they are commonly referred to as the "RI/FS"; a small-scale investigation of a problem to ascertain whether a proposed research approach is likely to provide useful data.

Floodplain: The flat or nearly flat land along a river or stream or in a tidal area that is covered by water during a flood.

Ground Water: The supply of fresh water found beneath the Earth's surface, usually in aquifers, which supply wells and springs.

Impoundment: A body of water or sludge confined by a dam, dike, floodgate, or other barrier.

National Priorities List (NPL): EPA's list of the most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for possible long-term remedial action under Superfund. The list is based primarily on the score a site receives from the Hazard Ranking System.

NPL: See **National Priorities List**.

On-Scene Coordinator (OSC): Designated EPA official who coordinates and directs Superfund removal actions or Clean Water Act oil- or hazardous-spill response actions.

Operable Unit: Term for each of a number of separate activities undertaken as part of a Superfund site cleanup.

OSC: See **On-Scene Coordinator**

PCB: See **Polychlorinated Biphenyls**.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB): A group of toxic, persistent chemicals used in electrical transformers and capacitors for insulating purposes, and in gas pipeline systems as lubricant. The sale and new use of these chemicals, also known as PCBs, were banned by law in 1979.

Potentially Responsible Party (PRP): Any individual or company--including owners, operators, transporters or generators--potentially responsible for, or contributing to a spill or other contamination at a Superfund site. Whenever possible, through administrative and legal actions, EPA requires PRPs to clean up hazardous sites they have contaminated.

PRP: See **Potentially Responsible Party**.

RA: See **Remedial Action**.

Record of Decision (ROD): A public document that explains which cleanup alternative(s) will be used at National Priorities List sites where, under CERCLA, Trust Funds pay for the cleanup.

Remedial Action (RA): The actual construction or implementation phase of a Superfund site cleanup that follows remedial design.

Removal Action: Short-term immediate actions taken to address releases of hazardous substances that require expedited response. (See **Cleanup**.)

Remedial Investigation: An in-depth study designed to gather data needed to determine the nature and extent of contamination at a Superfund site; establish site cleanup criteria; identify preliminary alternatives for remedial action; and support technical and cost analyses of alternatives. The remedial investigation is usually done with the feasibility study. Together they are usually referred to as the "**RI/FS**"

Remedial Project Manager (RPM): EPA or state official responsible for overseeing on-site remedial action.

RI/FS: See **Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study**

ROD: See **Record of Decision**

RPM: See **Remedial Project Manager**

Sediments: Soil, sand, and minerals washed from land into water, usually after rain. They pile up in reservoirs, rivers and harbors, destroying

fish and wildlife habitat, and clouding the water so that sunlight cannot reach aquatic plants. Careless farming, mining, and building activities will expose sediment materials, allowing them to wash off the land after rainfall.

Silt Curtain/Fence: silt curtain, also called a turbidity curtain, consists of a heavy synthetic fabric suspended in a water body to prevent sediment laden-water from migrating to the rest of the water body. Silt curtains and fences are commonly used when construction is required near or within a water body where other erosion and sediment controls cannot be used. This may include dredging and bank improvements.

SRI/FS: See **Supplemental Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study**.

Superfund: The program operated under the legislative authority of CERCLA and SARA that funds and carries out EPA solid waste emergency and long-term removal and remedial activities. These activities include establishing the National Priorities List, investigating sites for inclusion on the list, determining their priority, and conducting and/or supervising cleanup and other remedial actions.

Supplemental Remedial Investigation / Feasibility Study (SRI/FS): Additional information that EPA has decided is necessary to carry out a proposed cleanup in the RI/FS.

Time-Critical Removal: Removal actions are generally of short-term response actions taken to abate or mitigate imminent substantial threats to human health and the environment. Removal actions can be triggered potentially hazardous occurrences that cannot wait for remedial action.

Turbidity: A cloudy condition in water due to suspended silt or organic matter.